



NEWS RELEASE



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BLM-NMAC Partnership to Bring Federal Fire Assistance Funds to Non-Federal Lands In Rural New Mexico Communities

Farmington – Deputy Director Jim Hughes of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) Executive Director Samuel Montoya are kicking off a new wildfire risk-reduction program aimed at helping rural communities near BLM-managed public lands in New Mexico.

The announcement was made at the NMAC Annual Conference, Wednesday, June 16, at the Piedra Vista High School in Farmington.

For the first time, the BLM in New Mexico will be distributing federal dollars to be used on non-federal lands in the State, in cooperation with the New Mexico Association of Counties.

“This progressive partnership is a method of getting federal help to our at-risk communities that might otherwise not be able to compete for assistance,” said NMAC Executive Director Samuel Montoya. “Our relationship with New Mexico Counties will help put federal dollars to the best possible use in our communities. It is most refreshing to collaborate with BLM on this exciting and fundamental program.”

Rural communities will compete for National Fire Plan dollars for fire risk-reduction projects. Projects will include community risk-assessments and fire plans, fuel treatment on non-federal lands, plus outreach and education activities, such as creation of defensible space.

“Our vision is to bring government closer to the people and the needs of their communities,” said BLM Deputy Director Jim Hughes. “The NMAC has direct links to every county in the state. Our partnership will get National Fire Plan dollars to rural communities that otherwise may not be able to obtain this much-needed assistance.”



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The assistance effort will help rural communities at risk from wildland fire to reduce that risk in a three-phase process:

- Phase I will encompass a comprehensive statewide assessment, including current community wildfire mitigation efforts and needs. The effort will include both data collection and educational outreach to counties and municipalities.
- Phase II, beginning fall 2004, will distribute National Fire Plan dollars via the NMAC to counties with rural communities needing help with fire-planning, fuel-reduction, and outreach/education project development. This phase prepares rural communities for project implementation, and begins funding projects in communities ready to start on-the-ground work.
- Phase III, beginning fall 2005, will base funding allocations on actual project proposals from rural communities for specific project implementation.

-30-



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